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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**GOVERNOR DECLARES OCTOBER CONSUMER INFORMATION MONTH
DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS LAUNCHES AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

SACRAMENTO—Gov. Pete Wilson proclaimed October “Consumer Information Month” and urged Californians to learn their consumer rights and remedies.

“California consumers making knowledgeable choices are an important part of our flourishing economy, helping business and buyers thrive,” noted Gov. Wilson. “Consumer education is the most cost effective and least intrusive form of consumer protection. We can reduce the need for more red tape, regulations and rigmarole by increasing the information available to consumers concerning their rights and remedies in the marketplace.”

In concert with the Governor’s proclamation, the California Department of Consumer Affairs launched a public awareness campaign today with the theme “Don’t Fall Into Consumer Traps.” The campaign includes news releases, a special website area, and radio public service announcements. Consumers are urged to become better informed about consumer issues through the department’s resources.

The department maintains a website at www.dca.ca.gov, where consumers can look up licensee status for a number of professions, read on-line publications, learn about the latest scams, and receive referrals to other consumer-oriented websites. Referrals and information can also be obtained via the department’s toll free number, 800-952-5210, five days a week from 7:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. More than 180 publications, ranging from fact sheets to a comprehensive resource and referral guide, are available for the asking, most free of charge. Publications can be ordered by calling 916-323-7239, accessing the department’s web page, or writing to DCA Publications at 401 S Street, Suite 100, Sacramento, CA 95814.

“Although most businesses are run and staffed by honest, hard working people, our advice is still “Buyer Beware,” said Consumer Affairs Acting Director Ron Joseph. “Your best defense is a good offense — educate yourself so you make smart choices.”

How are Californians doing at educating themselves? A total of 19 specific consumer rights topics were recently tested in a statewide survey, with responses ranging from a low of 41% awareness of consumer rights to a high of 92%. The average awareness level was 67%, showing that, although there is high awareness on some issues, there is still room for improvement. Survey participants were most knowledgeable about the requirement that automotive repair facilities obtain authorization prior to performing repairs beyond those originally quoted, and least knowledgeable that a three-day right of cancellation does not apply to new or used car purchases.

The Department of Consumer Affairs is a leading consumer advocate in California government, establishing standards of competency for more than 200 professions/occupations and administering the regulatory functions of licensing, examination and enforcement for those professions. Last year, the department recovered \$26 million for consumers; fielded several hundred thousand calls through its 800 number; renewed licenses for more than 800,000 professionals and businesses; mediated thousands of consumer complaints; and took disciplinary action against more than 32,000 licensees.

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